

WVDN JUL 13, 2021



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Municipal Round Up July 12 - 19

By by rebecca stalnaker | WVDN JUL 13, 2021

Hinton — Summer workouts are being held for girls interested in cheerleading for Summers County High School or Summers County Middle School. The workouts will take place from July 12 - 31. The group will also be participating in a two-day stunt clinic during this time. Conditioning practice will be held July 15 and 16 at the Summers County High School gym. For more information, contact Aleshia Lilly at 304-646-9836 or send a message via Facebook.

The Summers County ARH Hospital is offering free sports physicals July 19 - 23. This is by appointment only and will be available at both the Rural Health Clinic and the Family Care Clinic. For more information, call 304-466-2918 for the Rural Health Clinic or 304-466-2501 for the Family Care Clinic.

Alderson — The Friends of Feral and Homeless Cats and Kittens Inc., based in Alderson, is holding a cat food drive in an effort to restock their "kitty-pantry." They will be set up outside Sugar Bear's Workshop in White Sulphur Springs on Thursday, July 15 between the hours of 3 - 6 p.m. Donations can also be sent via USPS to Friends of Ferals, 848 Mt. Zion Rd., Alderson, WV 24901.

Renick — The Renick Community Market will take place on Tuesday, July 13 between 4 - 6 p.m. The market is welcoming a new vendor this week, Howling Hounds Farm from White Sulphur Springs.

White Sulphur Springs — 50 East Restaurant in White Sulphur Springs is holding a live music event on Thursday, July 15 at 5 p.m.

Union — Monroe County Adult Education is looking for a photographer for Adult Education Graduation. The graduation event will take place on July 18. For more information contact Paulette Kirby at 304-772-3038. The Monroe County Public Library located in Union is hosting a series of blood drive events throughout the rest of the year. The entire list is currently available on the library's Facebook page. The next event will take place on July 30.

Lewisburg — As of Friday, July 9, the new synthetic turf and nets were being installed at Hollowell Park in Lewisburg. This comes just in time for the West Virginia State Little League Tournament, which will take place in Lewisburg between July 16 and 22.

Ronceverte — The Ronceverte City Council held its regular meeting on Monday, July 12 at 7 p.m.

Marlinton — The town of Marlinton Planning Commission rescheduled regular meeting will take place on Thursday, July 15 at 6 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Marlinton Municipal Building Auditorium. The Marlinton Town Council held their meeting on Monday, July 12 at 7 p.m. Interested parties were attend in person at the Municipal Building, as well as online via Zoom.

Dear Abby: Tuesday, July 13

By Abigail Van Buren | WVDN JUL 13, 2021

Friend Invited On Trip Seizes Control Of Agenda

Dear Abby: A few years ago, I asked a friend to accompany me to a concert for which I offered her a free ticket. (I paid \$150 for each one.) The original plan was to travel from New York state to Ohio, which would have been a three-day weekend. She responded with a grateful yes, then instantly changed the location to head in the opposite direction, planned out the entire trip, including the driving, and turned it into a five-day trip! Well, it happened again. She's a great travel companion, so I asked if she'd like to go to Nashville with me for a couple of days. It instantly changed to a week, and she invited other people to join us without discussing it with me. Within 90 minutes of bringing up the trip to her, it no longer includes Nashville! It's like she waited for me to invite her to do something just so she could change it to something she wanted to do. It really hurts that she oversteps my invitations. If I continue to plan the trip, including everything she wants to do, we will be gone for weeks. What can I say or do to make her see I really wanted to go to Nashville? —

Derailed in New York

Dear Derailed: Here's what to say to this presumptuous person: "The itinerary you have planned isn't what I had in mind at all, so carry on by yourself. I am going to Nashville." And then follow through. Bon voyage!

Dear Abby: I currently live in my parents' house with my 1-year-old son and husband. We live here not because of unfortunate circumstances or events, but because we help my elderly and disabled parents with things such as bills, rent, groceries, etc. Unfortunately, my lazy sister also lives under the same roof. She refuses to get a job or help around the house and often creates extreme drama. Benign events seem to set her off. I have told my parents on numerous occasions that I can't deal with the madness, and either she goes or we do. But I end up feeling such immense guilt at the thought of my parents struggling with bills and daily rituals that I end up pushing those feelings of anger and resentment aside. I don't know what I should do. Should I free myself from my sister's unhinged behavior and move out, or should I stick it out and suck it up in order to be a good daughter and help my parents? — **Rock and a Hard Place**

Dear Rock: The problem with issuing an ultimatum is that for it to be effective, one has to be prepared to follow through. You haven't done that, so your protestations aren't taken seriously. You and your husband need to have one more talk with your parents and make clear that the current living situation isn't working for you because it is too stressful. Tell them if the situation isn't changed — and your sister at the very least finds a job and contributes — you and your husband will be moving. Then follow through.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Heat Safety

By mark strobin guest columnist | WVDN JUL 13, 2021

A heat wave is a period of abnormally hot weather generally lasting more than two days. Heatwaves can occur with or without high humidity. They have potential to cover a large area, exposing a high number of people to hazardous heat.

Never, never leave children, disabled or elderly adults, or pets in parked, unattended vehicles. Studies have shown that the temperature inside a parked vehicle can rapidly rise to dangerous levels for people and pets. Leaving the windows slightly open does not significantly decrease the heating rate. The effects can be more severe on children because their bodies have not developed the ability to efficiently regulate internal temperature.

It is important to know the difference between a Heat Watch and a Heat Warning. Each National Weather Service Forecast Office issues some or all of the following heat-related products as conditions warrant. NWS local offices often collaborate with local partners to determine when an alert should be issued for a local area. For instance, residents of Florida are much more prepared for 90°F+ weather than residents in Alaska.

- **Excessive Heat Warning:** An Excessive Heat Warning is issued within 12 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb for this Warning is when the maximum heat index temperature is expected to be 105° or higher for at least 2 days and night time air temperatures will not drop below 75°; however, these criteria vary across the country, especially for areas not used to extreme heat conditions. If you don't take precautions immediately when conditions are extreme, you may become seriously ill or even die.
- **Excessive Heat Watches:** Heat watches are issued when conditions are favorable for an excessive heat event in the next 24 to 72 hours. A Watch is used when the risk of a heat wave has increased but its occurrence and timing is still uncertain.
- **Heat Advisory:** A Heat Advisory is issued within 12 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb for this Advisory is when the maximum heat index temperature is expected to be 100° or higher for at least 2 days, and night time air temperatures will not drop below 75°; however, these criteria vary across the country, especially for areas that are not used to dangerous heat conditions. Take precautions to avoid heat illness. If you don't take precautions, you may become seriously ill or even die.

The National Weather Service has multiple tools to assess the potential for heat stress due to extreme temperatures. One such item is the Heat Index. The Heat Index is a measure of how hot it really feels when relative humidity is factored in with the actual air temperature.

Hot temperatures does not mean warm waters. River and lakes can still be cold so please wear a lifejacket.

In summary, be safe when going outdoors in hot weather. When it is hot, wear lightweight, loose-fitting and light-colored clothing. Hats are also a good idea to protect your face and scalp from harmful UV rays if you will be spending time directly in the sunshine. Apply sunscreen liberally. Drink plenty of non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated beverages. When going out to the river or lake wear a lifejacket.

WVDA To Conduct Aerial Black Fly Suppression

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUL 13, 2021

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture will be conducting aerial treatments for biological suppression of black flies on the New, Bluestone, and Greenbrier Rivers on Thursday, July 14, weather and water levels permitting. Potentially, the treatments may continue into Friday, July 15.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture Black Fly Control Program has the responsibility of significantly reducing the black fly population in southeastern West Virginia without adversely affecting non-target aquatic organisms within the area of treatment. This is accomplished by monitoring black fly larval development in certain southern West Virginia river systems for the purpose of determining the optimum time to conduct black fly control operations. Suppression activities target problem areas of the New, Bluestone and Greenbrier Rivers.

Ireland's Musical Heritage To Be Presented At The Greenbrier County Public Library

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUL 13, 2021

Ireland's Musical Heritage, a free program featuring acclaimed performer and songwriter Patrick O'Flaherty, will be presented by the Greenbrier County Public Library Sunday, July 25, from 2 to 3:30 p.m.

Refreshments will be served during the program, made possible by the Music Performance Trust Fund, through Local 674 of the American Federation of Musicians.

The multi-talented O'Flaherty has many notable aspects to his biography, including once performing for Pope John Paul II and writing songs in a Celtic language that is almost lost. He plans to bring along several instruments, including the Irish button accordion, mandolin, harmonica and tenor banjo.

In addition to enjoying music, attendees will have a unique opportunity to question and converse with Patrick O'Flaherty at this special July event, which celebrates the 14th anniversary of the opening of the library facility at 152 Robert W. McCormick Dr. in downtown Lewisburg.

O'Flaherty is the embodiment of Ireland's musical heritage. He was born and grew up in Ireland. Until age 17, his only language was Gaelic, which only four percent of the Irish population now speaks fluently. He writes and sings in Gaelic, as well as English.

O'Flaherty has performed in venues ranging from traditional pubs to the inaugural ball of President Reagan. He also has performed in such varied spots around the globe as the Caribbean, Israel and in his native Ireland.

The performance for the pope occurred in Washington, D.C. O'Flaherty and his brother Danny were approached with a request for the pope to use their microphone to make a statement. The pope ended up standing between the O'Flaherty brothers.

While O'Flaherty is particularly known for his versatility with instruments, he also possesses a singing voice that ranges from robust and jocular to a lilting inflection with that yearning quality that is a hallmark of the most beloved Celtic singers.

The acoustics of the library's picture window sitting area will showcase that compelling voice. His repertoire includes his own compositions and traditional songs ranging from lively to reflective.

This special appearance at the Greenbrier Public Library was arranged by Gary Williams, secretary and treasurer of Local 674 of the American Federation of Musicians.

The grant is from the Music Performance Trust Fund, sponsored by major recording companies. Typically, the fund provides matching grants, but created a special opportunity for 100 percent funding as a result of so many musical events cancelled because of the pandemic.

Williams underscored the impressiveness of O'Flaherty's resume when asked why he had chosen this particular musician.

"Patrick is a special guy," he said. In large cities such as New Orleans and Washington, "Patrick is a big deal." (It seems fitting that that one of O'Flaherty's albums is titled Himself, a humorous nod to a reference

regarding someone important.)

For those concerned about social distancing for the event, the library will provide, in the back of the normal seating, chairs six feet apart. Wearing of masks will be appreciated.

More information about the event is available from the library at 304-647-7568.

Any organizations interested in sponsoring such an event are welcome to contact Williams at afmlocal674@suddenlink.net.

WSS Community Clothes Closet

By WV Daily News | WVDN JUL 13, 2021

The Good Neighbors Community Clothes Closet in White Sulphur Springs has reopened after being closed in June for maintenance. Sponsored by the Emmanuel United Methodist Church, the clothes closet currently has a good inventory of clean, gently used summer clothing NO CHARGE, including men's golf shirts and shorts, dress shirts and slacks, ladies' dresses, skirts, tops, jeans, capris and much more. Clothing items are available for children from ages six months through middle school.

The clothing bank, located in the basement level of Emmanuel UMC at 136 Hanna Lane (off Dry Creek Road) in WSS is operated by volunteers and serves as an outreach program by offering FREE clothes to residents in the local community.

Currently, the GNCCC is open Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon and the first Monday monthly from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For additional information, please call Donna Sams direct at 304-536-3419 or the EUMC office at 304-536-1291 and leave a message.

Hearings Set On W.Va. Redistricting

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 13, 2021

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Public hearings have been set on West Virginia's redistricting process. The Legislature's joint redistricting committee will hold 12 in-person hearings and three virtual hearings. The first hearing is July 27 at the Putnam County Judicial Building in Winfield. Other hearings are set for July 29 at Chief Logan State Park in Logan, Aug. 3 at Tamarack in Beckley, Aug. 4 at the Summersville Arena and Conference Center and Aug. 10 at Stonewall Resort in Roanoke. Lawmakers will decide on legislative district boundaries as well as how to split the state into two congressional districts, down from the current three. West Virginia's long population slide cost the state its third congressional seat, according to U.S. Census Bureau data released in April. A special session is expected to convene later in the year on the redistricting process.

Judge extends order halting WVa needle exchange law

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 13, 2021

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. (AP) — A federal judge Thursday extended a temporary restraining order on West Virginia's new law that tightens requirements on needle exchange programs.

U.S. District Judge Chuck Chambers said he will mull the argument by plaintiffs that the law, which was due to take effect Friday, is unconstitutional, The Herald-Dispatch reported.

Republican Gov. Jim Justice signed the bill in April over the objections of critics who said it will restrict access to clean needles amid a spike in HIV cases. The American Civil Liberties Union's West Virginia chapter filed the federal lawsuit last month and Chambers issued the restraining order June 28.

The law would require licenses for syringe collection and distribution programs. Operators would have to offer an array of health outreach services, including overdose prevention education and substance abuse treatment program referrals. Participants also must show an identification card to obtain a syringe.

Programs also would be required to receive majority support from local county commissions and municipal councils.

Advocates view the regulations as onerous.

Supporters said the legislation would help those addicted to opioids get connected to health care services fighting substance abuse. Some Republican lawmakers had said the changes were necessary because some needle exchange programs were "operating so irresponsibly" that they were causing syringe litter.

The ACLU chapter said the law would likely lead to more HIV cases and the spread of other bloodborne illnesses.

It would take effect amid one of the nation's highest spikes in HIV cases related to intravenous drug use. The surge, clustered mainly around the capital of Charleston and the city of Huntington, was attributed at least in part to the cancellation in 2018 of Charleston's needle exchange program.

The surge has led to an investigation by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that last month found emergency departments and inpatient medical personnel rarely conducted HIV testing on intravenous drug users in Kanawha County.

Previously, city leaders and first responders complained that the program in Kanawha County led to an increase in needles being left in public places and abandoned buildings, and it was shut down.

The CDC describes syringe programs as "safe, effective, and cost-saving."

Biden Speaks Volumes In A Whisper To Make A Point

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 13, 2021



DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden was at a public transit station in Wisconsin, talking about repairing roads and bridges when he shifted gears and began defending his plan to send money to parents for each minor child, payments some critics call a “giveaway.”

Biden folded his arms, rested on the lectern, leaned into the mic and lowered his voice.

“Hey, guys, I think it’s time to give ordinary people a tax break,” he said, almost whispering as he addressed his critics. “The wealthy are doing fine.”

It was the latest instance of Biden speaking volumes by whispering.

The White House and communications experts say Biden’s whispering is just this veteran politician’s old-school way of trying to make a connection while emphasizing a point.

Biden’s critics on the right as well as some late-night TV talk show hosts say the whispers are “creepy” and “weird.” Conservatives use the dramatic soft talk to fuel the narrative that the Democratic president is unfit for the job, and comedians deploy it to generate laughs.

“It’s an intimate form of communication,” said Vanessa Beasley, associate professor of communication studies at Vanderbilt University.

Biden whispered some of his answers to reporters’ questions during an impromptu White House news conference last month after he and a group of Senate Republicans announced they had reached a deal to spend \$973 billion on rebuilding the nation’s infrastructure.

As he stood in the East Room, Biden was questioned about his timeline for providing additional financial help to families. He leaned in, eyes wide, and whispered: “I got them \$1.9 trillion in relief so far. They’re going to be getting checks in the mail that are consequential.”

During a lengthy response to a separate question, he whispered, “I wrote the bill,” before bending down to get closer to the microphone and adding, “on the environment.”

On the subject of employers' hiring difficulties, Biden leaned into the mic again, arms resting on the lectern and said softly that the solution is to "pay them more."

Beasley said the use of whispering by Biden, who was a U.S. senator and vice president for a total of more than 40 years, is a throwback to a long-ago time of chummier relations between lawmakers and members of the Washington press corps.

"I think it's a symbolic gesture to a kind of intimacy and familiarity," she said.

Beasley and others noted the contrast between Biden and former President Donald Trump, who often spoke loudly and angrily.

"One of the things that Trump never did was whisper," said Robin Lakoff, professor emerita of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley.

Public speakers — lawmakers, celebrities, corporate executives — often raise or lower their voices for dramatic effect or tell jokes to keep their audiences following along instead of falling asleep.

Beasley said the tone of political discourse these days seems set to loud so that "it sort of sets everybody back a little bit when you see someone going in a different direction and reducing their volume."

Lakoff said what Biden does isn't really whispering because his vocal chords vibrate and make sound.

"A true whisper is something you wouldn't be able to hear very well," she said, comparing what Biden does to a "stage whisper" in which an actor in a play steps out of character to share a secret with the audience or preview some action that's about to happen.

The White House defended Biden, saying conservatives who criticize the way he speaks, including his stuttering, do so because they don't have a better agenda to offer voters.

"Under President Biden's leadership, COVID cases have plunged by over 90%, we've achieved an historic level of job creation, the economy is growing at its highest rate in 40 years, and we've achieved a breakthrough on the world stage to stop the offshoring of American jobs," deputy press secretary Andrew Bates said.

"And this performative criticism is just the latest acknowledgment by Republicans that he's running the table on them while they're grasping for a case to make," Bates whispered.

Kayleigh McEnany, a White House press secretary for Trump, called Biden's whispering "peculiar" and "crazy" before panelists on the Fox News Channel program she co-hosts discussed it. Other Fox News personalities and guests also panned Biden's low-volume speech.

On the late-night talk show circuit, comedian Stephen Colbert featured what he called Biden's "new rhetorical flourish" in a recent monologue on his CBS show.

After airing clips of the president, Colbert leaned into a hand-held microphone and whispered: "Mr. President, Mr. President. You know I'm a fan, but the way you lean forward and whisper. Guess what? It's a little creepy. It's a little creepy."

On the flip side, Biden raises his voice, too, as he did while addressing the nation from the White House lawn on July Fourth.

"On this sacred day, I look out to those monuments on our National Mall, and beyond them, into the hearts of our people across the land and I know this," he said, voice rising as he neared the conclusion of his speech.

"It's never, ever been a good bet to bet against America. Never.

"We just have to remember who we are. We are the United States of America," Biden thundered. "And there's nothing — nothing — we can't do if we do it together."

Pfizer Discuss COVID-19 Booster

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 13, 2021

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pfizer says it plans to meet with top U.S. health officials Monday to discuss the drugmaker's request for federal authorization of a third dose of its COVID-19 vaccine as President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser acknowledged that "it is entirely conceivable, maybe likely" that booster shots will be needed.

The company said it was scheduled to have the meeting with the Food and Drug Administration and other officials Monday, days after Pfizer asserted that booster shots would be needed within 12 months.

Pfizer's Dr. Mikael Dolsten told The Associated Press last week that early data from the company's booster study suggests people's antibody levels jump five- to 10-fold after a third dose, compared to their second dose months earlier — evidence it believes supports the need for a booster.

On Sunday, Dr. Anthony Fauci didn't rule out the possibility but said it was too soon for the government to recommend another shot. He said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the FDA did the right thing last week by pushing back against Pfizer's assertion with their statement that they did not view booster shots as necessary "at this time."

Fauci said clinical studies and laboratory data have yet to fully bear out the need for a booster to the current two-shot Pfizer and Moderna vaccines or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson regimen.

"Right now, given the data and the information we have, we do not need to give people a third shot," he said. "That doesn't mean we stop there. ... There are studies being done now ongoing as we speak about looking at the feasibility about if and when we should be boosting people."

He said it was quite possible in the coming months "as data evolves" that the government may urge a booster based on such factors as age and underlying medical conditions. "Certainly it is entirely conceivable, may be likely at some time, we will need a boost," Fauci said.

Currently, only about 48% of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated. Some parts of the country have far lower immunization rates, and in those places, the delta variant is surging. Last week, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the CDC director, said that's leading to "two truths" — highly immunized swaths of America are getting back to normal while hospitalizations are rising in other places.

Fauci said it was inexplicable that some Americans are so resistant to getting a vaccine when scientific data show how effective it is in staving off COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations, and he was dismayed by efforts to block making vaccinations more accessible, such as Biden's suggestion of door-to-door outreach.

The grassroots component of the federal vaccination campaign has been in operation since April when supplies of shots began outpacing demand. It was outlined and funded by Congress in the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill passed in March and overwhelmingly is carried out by local officials and private-sector workers and volunteers.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., blasted opposition to vaccination efforts from some GOP lawmakers as "absolute insanity." He said House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy of California and others in the party need to speak out against "these absolute clown politicians playing on your vaccine fears for their own selfish gain."

Biden Backs Trump Rejection Of China's South China Sea Claim

By The Associated Press | WVDN JUL 13, 2021



By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration on Sunday upheld a Trump-era rejection of nearly all of China’s significant maritime claims in the South China Sea. The administration also warned China that any attack on the Philippines in the flashpoint region would draw a U.S. response under a mutual defense treaty.

The stern message from Secretary of State Antony Blinken came in a statement released ahead of this week’s fifth anniversary of an international tribunal’s ruling in favor of the Philippines, against China’s maritime claims around the Spratly Islands and neighboring reefs and shoals. China rejects the ruling.

Ahead of the fourth anniversary of the ruling last year, the Trump administration came out in favor of the ruling but also said it regarded as illegitimate virtually all Chinese maritime claims in the South China Sea outside China’s internationally recognized waters. Sunday’s statement reaffirms that position, which had been laid out by Trump’s secretary of state, Mike Pompeo.

“Nowhere is the rules-based maritime order under greater threat than in the South China Sea,” Blinken said, using language similar to Pompeo’s. He accused China of continuing “to coerce and intimidate Southeast Asian coastal states, threatening freedom of navigation in this critical global throughway.”

“The United States reaffirms its July 13, 2020 policy regarding maritime claims in the South China Sea,” he said, referring to Pompeo’s original statement. “We also reaffirm that an armed attack on Philippine armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea would invoke U.S. mutual defense commitments.”

Article IV of the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty obligates both countries to come to each other’s aid in case of an attack.

Prior to Pompeo’s statement, U.S. policy had been to insist that maritime disputes between China and its smaller neighbors be resolved peacefully through U.N.-backed arbitration. The shift did not apply to disputes over land features that are above sea level, which are considered to be “territorial” in nature.

Although the U.S. continues to remain neutral in territorial disputes, it has effectively sided with the

Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, all of which oppose Chinese assertions of sovereignty over maritime areas surrounding contested South China Sea islands, reefs and shoals.

China reacted angrily to the Trump administration's announcement and is likely to be similarly peeved by the Biden administration's decision to retain and reinforce it.

"We call on (China) to abide by its obligations under international law, cease its provocative behavior, and take steps to reassure the international community that it is committed to the rules-based maritime order that respects the rights of all countries, big and small," Blinken said in the statement,

China has rejected the tribunal's decision, which it has dismissed as a "sham," and has refused to participate in arbitration proceedings. It has continued to defy the decision with aggressive actions that have brought it into territorial spats with Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia in recent years.

As last year's statement did, Sunday's announcement came amid heightened tensions between the U.S. and China over numerous issues, including the coronavirus pandemic, human rights, Chinese policy in Hong Kong and Tibet and trade, that have sent relations plummeting.

China claims almost all of the South China Sea and routinely objects to any action by the U.S. military in the region. Five other governments claim all or part of the sea, through which approximately \$5 trillion in goods are shipped every year.

China has sought to shore up its claims to the sea by building military bases on coral atolls, leading the U.S. to sail its warships through the region on what it calls freedom of operation missions. The United States has no claims itself to the waters but has deployed warships and aircraft for decades to patrol and promote freedom of navigation and overflight in the busy waterway.